

# Entrepreneurship education in Austria<sup>1</sup>

## 1 OVERVIEW

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Entrepreneurship education in Austria is primarily regulated through the Austrian Strategy on Lifelong Learning and the Curriculum of pre-vocational school, which are accompanied by a set of well-established support mechanisms for implementation. The country has been developing a diverse range of entrepreneurship programmes both at the national and regional level. Initiatives are available for the different levels of education targeting students, teachers and the schools themselves.

One of the most successful initiatives in Austria is the Entrepreneurship Skills Certificate®, a voluntary additional qualification to support the development of students' knowledge of business and entrepreneurship in schools. The initiative runs as an add-on to the regular compulsory secondary education. It is a modularised training programme, implemented at individual school level alongside the regular curriculum. This Austrian certification programme is recognised widely as a best practice, and has been adopted in Germany, France and the Czech Republic, as well as in Albania, Kosovo, Mali and Ethiopia.

Austria offers many other initiatives aimed at the skills development of young people. One such example is Innovative Youth. The Innovative Youth programme offers alternative educational provision for scientific and engineering disciplines to develop creativity, curiosity and the innovative appetite of the students. The programme has been successfully implemented since the late 1980s. Programmes for teachers are also available, for example the Lehrer/Innen in der Wirtschaft programme. This programme is specifically oriented towards improving entrepreneurship knowledge in teachers through providing them with access to industry, giving them the opportunity to learn about the problems that companies face and bringing the experiences back into their educational programmes.

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The content of this document, including the case studies and the descriptions of the initiatives reflect the information available as of August 2015.

## 2 GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDIES

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### Entrepreneur's Skill Certificate® (ESC)

#### 2.1 SUMMARY

The Entrepreneur's Skill Certificate® (ESC, Unternehmerführerschein) is a voluntary additional qualification to support the development of students knowledge of business and entrepreneurship in schools. The initiative was first developed by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber in 2004 and has since expanded to Germany, France and the Czech Republic, as well as to Albania, Kosovo, Mali and Ethiopia. The ESC is a modularised training programme, implemented at the individual school level alongside the regular curriculum. As a modularised programme there is the flexibility to deliver some of the content in school time, and other modules can be completed through self-study or after the school day. The target age of the Entrepreneur's Skill Certificate® is 10 to 19 year olds. In 2013/14 more than 254 schools in Austria offered the ESC alongside the regular curriculum. In total, tens of thousand of students are trained and certified annually across the countries in which it is delivered. The course material is available in print or online (e-learning course). To award the ESC, students have to pass all four modules which are examined on line as well as through a final board examination. All teachers' supporting the delivery of the ESC are specially trained and certified.

#### 2.2 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE

The Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate® is based on an initiative of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and is offered as a supplementary qualification for school children from grade eight (age 10). The initiative was set up in 2004 and recognised as a best practice example of entrepreneurship education by the European Commission in 2006 and Eurochambres (the umbrella association of European chambers of commerce) in 2011. ESC was developed to plug a gap in the education offering in Austria, which at the time was not offering enough economic knowledge to young students. Although economics was recognised as an important part of the curricula, standards of implementation were questioned. The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber combined the need of improvement of economic knowledge with the promotion of entrepreneurship and developed the ESC as a modularised training programme which could be delivered alongside the main curriculum in a standard way, leading to a recognised certificate.

The Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate® consists of four modules:

- Module A consists of activities focusing on the Work environment; Economic cycle; Economic sectors; From the idea to the product; Economy for the market; Who's the Boss? (The Path to being an entrepreneur).
- Module B consists of activities focusing on National accounting; Money and the value of money; Budget and national finances; Economic world - World economic; In Europe.
- Module C consists of the following activities: From idea to market opportunity; Focusing on the customer; Enterprise organisation/governance; Business Plan.

- The final Module UP includes the following activities: Introduction to accounting; Administrative accounting - double entry accounting; Value added tax; Taxation of income and taxation procedures; Cost accounting in the enterprise; Staff Costs; Financing; The enterprise in day-to-day business.

The content of Module A is focused on basic concepts and fundamental economic relationships. Module A can be taken from school grade 7 upwards. Modules B, C and UP are offered from the upper secondary level onwards (Module B deals with national economic content, Module C outlines the foundations of business management).

The concluding Module UP is undertaken from grade 11 onwards or, after leaving school, on the basis of self-study or at an adult learning institution.

The examinations for modules A-C of the Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate® are taken online and schools can request a specific examination date. For preparation for the online examination, candidates can check the level of their knowledge in a mock examination (module A-C). The results of the mock examination can be used as a basis on which to decide whether to register for the examination or undertake a further study cycle.

The online examination of each of the modules (A-C) is compiled individually by a random generator from a pool of questions specified by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber. Each examination can be repeated as often as desired, but the examination fee must be paid each time. Each candidate receives their results immediately after the examination and therefore knows whether the examination has been passed or not. The examination is passed if 63 % of the questions were answered correctly.

The last module (UP) is concluded with a board examination at an office for master examinations of the chambers of commerce. The examination is assessed as having been passed "with distinction", "with merit", with a "pass" or as a "fail". The original certificates are issued by the national licensed partner of the Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate® and presented at a ceremony in the school.

If all four Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate® examinations have been successfully passed, they represent the equivalent entrepreneur's examination as prescribed by law in Austria for regulated crafts and trades. The added value of the certificate is that it is a reliable standard, supported through online examinations and leads to a recognised certificate.

## 2.3 TARGET GROUP(S)

The programme is targeted at young people between the ages of 10 and 19. These students are ones who have chosen to take an optional study programme on a voluntary basis to provide them with entrepreneurship and business skills.

In Austria alone, 26,583 students have completed 51,463 Modules of the Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate® (2015). Across the participating countries there have been more than 42,000 participants. The flexible structure of the programme allows for the first module to be taken as early as lower secondary school and the following modules in upper secondary school. Further flexibility is ensured through the number of schools and adult education centres that support the ESC. In the event that young people or young adults have not been

able to complete the Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate® while they were at school, adult education institutions offer the individual modules as well as the module examinations.

## 2.4 ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

The Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate® was developed at the initiative of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber. The concept as well as the curriculum was further supported by input from other stakeholders including the Vienna University of Economics and Business, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Wirtschaft und Schule, teachers and students.

## 2.5 ACHIEVEMENTS, RESULTS

The Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate® is a standardised and recognised certificate for Entrepreneurship Education developed in Austria which has expanded significantly since 2004. ESC has been recognised on a European and at an International level as best practice and has been taken up and adapted in seven additional countries.

The Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate® has already been transferred and adapted to national legislation in Germany, France and the Czech Republic, as well as to Albania, Kosovo, Mali and Ethiopia. Tens of thousands of students are annually ESC® trained and certified in Austria, Germany, France and Czech Republic.

## 2.6 MONITORING RESULTS

The ESC supports fostering entrepreneurial skills of students, teacher training and embedding entrepreneurship education in the school environment. It provides an important example of provision of entrepreneurship education in schools and is also flexible due to the modularised structure.

The curriculum as well as the learning outcomes are constantly monitored, evaluated and adapted if required. In this process all relevant stakeholders from the local to the national level are involved (e.g. authorities of regional, national governments), but also the opinions and suggestions from teachers, students and graduates are considered.

## 2.7 LESSONS LEARNT

As the Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate® focuses mostly on theoretical knowledge it is highly recommended to combine the initiative with practice-oriented initiatives like the Junior Enterprise initiative.

The commitment of the schools, teachers and students, but also of regional and national actors (e.g. ministries or special interest groups) is very important for successful take up and recognition of the ESC."

## Further information

Organisation: Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, Abteilung für Bildungspolitik

E-mail: [unternehmerfuehrerschein@wko.at](mailto:unternehmerfuehrerschein@wko.at)

Further information in English and German:

- [https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/kampagnen/ufs\\_en/index.en.html](https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/kampagnen/ufs_en/index.en.html)
- Information Folder:  
[https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/kampagnen/ufs\\_de/downloadbereich/UF\\_A4\\_Folder\\_EN-.pdf](https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/kampagnen/ufs_de/downloadbereich/UF_A4_Folder_EN-.pdf)

## Certified Entrepreneurship Schools

### 2.8 SUMMARY OF THE INITIATIVE

Entrepreneurship Education for School-based innovation (e.e.si) is an 'impulse centre' set up by the Austrian Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs along with other stakeholders. It is aimed at certifying schools as 'Certified Entrepreneurship Schools' (Zertifizierung Entrepreneurship-Schule). The certification supports the premise that entrepreneurship education is a holistic activity, which should be taught in all subjects, not as a curricula add-on. Sustainable entrepreneurship education is only possible if it is an integrated part of school life and involves everyone. Those schools which are awarded the certification have to implement activities on a school / college level through an organisational framework for entrepreneurship education. The certification process is available once a year starting end of March and finishing end of October. The certification is available on two levels: basic and advanced, and has to be renewed every two years.

### 2.9 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE

In 2006, the e.e.si impulse centre for Entrepreneurship Education was established on behalf of the Austrian Ministry for Education and Women (bmbf). The impulse centre works with multipliers in the nine Austrian provinces to improve entrepreneurship education in secondary VET, business schools and colleges, and to foster a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship both in students (aged between 15 and 19 years) and teachers. In order to assure and improve the quality of entrepreneurship education a set of criteria for the 'entrepreneurship school' were developed. This process resulted in a certificate for entrepreneurship schools. The certificate was awarded for the first time in 2011/12.

The certification is called 'ONR 42001' and when awarded to a school, confirms a certain standard in the organisation in the delivery of entrepreneurship education. This means that entrepreneurship education is implemented in a holistic, targeted way, embedded in the school life. The assumption behind stimulating this approach is that entrepreneurship education can only lead to sustained effects if it is fully integrated into the school development process and is a central component of all teaching and learning activities, understood by and engaged in by all i.e. teachers, parents, pupils and the local business environment. Therefore it is not just the learning and teaching which are planned for and designed to be 'entrepreneurial'. Certification of an entire school is available on two levels; a basic (level 1) and advanced level (level 2). Depending on the level, certain criteria have to be fulfilled to become certified.

For both levels, criteria from three areas have to be attained:

- Entrepreneurship activities at the school/college, e.g. entrepreneurship day, company visits, extra-curricular activities
- Entrepreneurship basics for teachers working at the school/college, e.g. basic and advanced in-house trainings at the school, attending relevant seminars, setting up-teacher teams
- An organisational framework for entrepreneurship education on the school level e.g. anchoring entrepreneurship education in the school profile, documentation of entrepreneurship activities, coordination point for entrepreneurship education in the school

For each of the three areas and levels (basic and advanced) a list of possible activities has been set out by e.e.si. In each area there are several mandatory and facultative criteria which have to be documented and approved during the certification process. The certificate has to be renewed every two years to ensure that the entrepreneurial spirit and entrepreneurial activities continue at the school also after the certification.

## 2.10 ACHIEVEMENTS, RESULTS

The first certificate was issued in 2012 in Vienna. In 2013 another 11 schools from across Austria were awarded the certificate and many others are in the middle of the certification process.

After the first pilot of the certification to become an entrepreneurship school, the process was presented to the nine provinces in Austria for discussion and consultation. This led to slight changes and adaptations being implemented.

## 2.11 LESSONS LEARNT

The approach taken to setting up the certification involved a range of stakeholders. An important component was brainstorming with the teachers and principals within the respective schools being put forward for the certificate.

A mechanism for doing this is through a World-Entrepreneurship-Café approach, where everything is gathered that is already happening at the school, so it can be showcased in its entirety. Schools become very motivated and buy in to the entrepreneurial experience when they see how much is already happening.

### Further information

Organisation: Bundesweites Impulszentrum für Entrepreneurship-Education

Website: <http://www.eesi-impulszentrum.at/what-we-do/entrepreneurship-schule/>

Further documents:

- Certification Handbook 2014: <http://www.eesi-impulszentrum.at/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Zertifizierungshandbuch-EE-032014.pdf>
- Certification Mindmap 2014: [http://www.eesi-impulszentrum.at/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/20130516\\_LY\\_eesiMindmap2A.pdf](http://www.eesi-impulszentrum.at/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/20130516_LY_eesiMindmap2A.pdf)

## 3 EXAMPLES OF ON-GOING INITIATIVES ADDRESSING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

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### 3.1 INNOVATIVE YOUTH - JUGEND INNOVATIV

The Innovative Youth programme was set up in late 1980s to overcome the barriers students have to engaging with new technologies and intensify project work in schools. The ultimate aim is to increase involvement of pupils in STEM subjects as they go on to higher education.

The Innovative Youth initiative offers a programme through which pupils can develop their own projects and compete for funding. There are many different categories of competitions, including: young entrepreneurs, design, engineering, science and sustainability. After almost 30 years of successful implementation, the programme is still very popular among young Austrians. In 2014/2015 there were over 35 student projects across seven different competing categories. When it was launched for its 28th round (2015/2016) around 530 project ideas, from 1,800 pupils entered the competition. Teachers provide significant support for the student projects which is considered to be a key success factor.

### 3.2 TEACHERS IN BUSINESS - LEHRER/INNEN IN DER WIRTSCHAFT

'Lehrer/Innen in der Wirtschaft' is an initiative that promotes entrepreneurship among teachers. The programme is offered by the Initiative for Teaching Entrepreneurship (IFTE). Throughout the programme, teachers focus on understanding economic issues by experiencing managerial and operational jobs in businesses themselves. This teacher training initiative involves companies and teachers and has been a valuable learning tool to develop mutual understanding between the education professionals and the world of industry.

### 3.3 ENTERPRISE WITHOUT BORDERS

The Enterprise without Borders is an internationally recognised programme of Junior Achievement (Junior Enterprise). The concept of the programme is closely connected with the Junior Company initiative. The student teams that participate and develop mini companies under the Junior Company scheme can take advantage of the Enterprise without Borders online platform to network and join ventures with other similar student-companies. The programme offers guidance and mentoring, and the experiences range from simple online presence and meetings, to joint creation of products and services.

### 3.4 YEAR OF RESEARCH - JAHR DER FORSCHUNG

The Year of Research is an initiative of the Federal Ministry for Science, Research and Economy targeted to the entire Austrian society, with special categories for children below 10 years old and those in the secondary education (11-17 years old). The Year of Research is based on a simple online platform through which the individual participants and teams can register and submit their ideas. The ideas need to be well developed by the young participants before they participate. Teachers and schools help in developing the first ideas through helping children to learn to collaborate, distribute tasks and lead the process. After submitting the proposals, each year a selected jury judges the proposals and selects the best, which are granted prizes. Since 2008 around 57,000 pupils participated in the initiative, coming from 463 schools and educational (vocational) centres.

### 3.5 FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACT DETAILS ON THE INITIATIVES

Title of initiative in English	Innovative Youth	Teachers in Business	Enterprise without Borders	Year of Research
Title of the initiative in the local language	Jugend Innovativ	Lehrer/Innen in der Wirtschaft	Enterprise without Borders	Jahr der Forschung
Type of initiative	Student competition	Teacher training	Experimental learning, online platform	Competition
Launch date of the initiative	1987	N/A	N/A	2008
Name of implementing body	Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Wirtschaft; Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen	Initiative for Teaching Entrepreneurship IFTE	Junior Enterprise Austria	Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Wirtschaft
Level of education	Secondary	Primary, Secondary, VET	Secondary	Primary, Secondary, VET
Target group	Institutions	Teachers	Pupils	Pupils
Link to further information	<a href="http://www.jugendinnovativ.at/Satellite.aspx?35=37&amp;109=2">http://www.jugendinnovativ.at/Satellite.aspx?35=37&amp;109=2</a>	<a href="http://www.ifte.at/">http://www.ifte.at/</a>	<a href="http://junior.cc/junior-programme/enterprise-without-borders">http://junior.cc/junior-programme/enterprise-without-borders</a>	<a href="http://jahrderforschung.at/einreichung/">http://jahrderforschung.at/einreichung/</a>
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